

# Salisbury Cathedral Close Preservation Society

*"Rus In Urbe"*

Patron: Rt. Hon. Sir Edward Heath K.G. M.B.E. M.P.  
Chairman: Sir Robin Ibbs K.B.E.  
Secretary: Mrs Alison Pinkerton O.B.E.

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The position of Vice-Chairman of the Society has been vacant since the death of John Hardiman. We are pleased to announce that John Wort has kindly agreed to undertake this task. Filling the vacancy will strengthen the Society's ability to deal with major issues. In recent months the main activity has been to keep a watchful eye on matters that may affect the Close in future; Notably, traffic and parking, building alterations, the landscape of the Close and any developing plans for the Magna Carta Centre.

### **Annual Society Lecture October 15<sup>th</sup> 2001**

The lecture 'Looking after the Historical Close, then and now'; given jointly by Brigadier Kit Owen the Chapter Clerk and Andrew Robertson, Clerk of Works, to an audience which filled the Salisbury Museum Lecture Theatre, was an outstanding success. The presentation aided by computer-generated illustrations was fascinating and much appreciated by those attending.

### **Traffic in the Close**

Traffic management in the Close is a continuing concern of the Society, and is an item on every agenda for its Committee. There is a well-established Transport Sub-Committee, which oversees the work related on this matter.

One of the main activities undertaken by this Sub-Committee, with help from other Society members, is to conduct surveys of traffic and of parking in the Close. These surveys are carried out in association with the Chapter Clerk and in collaboration with the Close Constable and his staff. A series of surveys was conducted in September and October 2001.

In September surveys were undertaken to assess whether there had been any change in the volume of traffic generated by the schools in the Close, a particular issue at the time because Leadenhall School had applied for permission to build replacement classrooms and planning permission was likely to be linked with requirements for traffic management. The surveys were conducted between 08.00-09.00 in the morning and 15.00-17.00 in the evening on two days during term time. All vehicles entering and exiting the Close through all three Gates (High Street, Harnham and Queen's) were recorded, as was their entry pass, (if any). These surveys were comparable with earlier surveys in 1998, 1999 and 2000 and allowed us to evaluate trends over that period. The data very clearly showed that there had been no reduction in the volume of traffic entering and leaving The Close during those hours. Analysis of the entry passes indicated that almost exactly 60 per cent of this traffic is generated by the two schools, the larger part by Leadenhall school.

This report has been passed to the Chapter Clerk and also to the Salisbury District Council Director of Planning and to the Chairman of the Planning Committee.

The survey in October was carried out to investigate the use of the Close as a 'rat run' during the evening rush hour, by drivers from Crane St wishing to avoid congestion in New, Brown and Exeter streets. In 1998 the Chapter Clerk agreed to the Society's request to close the Harnham Gate to vehicular traffic between 17.30 and 18.30. However this had been discontinued because of the lack of manpower to close and then reopen the gate at a busy time for the Close Constables. There was now concern that the 'rat run' was becoming re-established. A survey was conducted on one evening in October designed to identify all those cars that passed through the Close between the hours of 16.30-18.30 and whether they showed a pass issued by the Close Constable. This identified 20 cars which were without passes and were inferred to have been on the 'rat run'; most of them passed through between 17.15-18.00. This does not indicate a major problem at present, although 20 cars is 20 more than should be using the Close as a through route at that time. But it is clear that the habit

has been re-established and the Society's Committee will be keeping a watchful eye for any increase.

The work carried out by the Working Party on Traffic Management and the volunteers who assist with the surveys is of immense importance. It provides, over a span of years, numerical data on the traffic and parking in the Close which is not otherwise available.

#### **The Close Landscape Committee**

The Society is represented on this Committee by Mrs Priscilla Mackay. The Committee meets twice a year, in the autumn to plan the programme of winter maintenance work to the Close trees, and in the spring to review this work and plan future policy.

As a result of the work of the Committee there has been significant improvement, not only in the appearance of the churchyard and immediate surroundings of the Cathedral, but also in Marsh Close, Rack Close and the Cathedral School grounds. The new willows in the Marsh Close, together with the appropriate pruning of the established trees are a good example of their recommendations.

The Society has over the years made a number of financial contributions to the planting and general management of the trees. Recently it has supported the work of the Committee by contributing to the cost of disposing of the base and roots of one of the chestnut trees in the churchyard which had to be felled earlier last year. In October a millennium yew tree was planted in the Cathedral School grounds. Members of the Society's Committee were invited to the occasion.

#### **The Magna Carta Centre**

The Cathedral Chapter has recently appointed a director of its Magna Carta office, Commodore Antony Chilton. The Magna Carta Centre announced by the Cathedral in 1999 as a project to provide better accommodation for the Magna Carta and visitor facilities, is likely to have an impact on the ambience of the Close. John Wort a Committee member, and now Vice Chairman, has agreed to take on the task of taking a special interest in the Magna Carta project as it develops, so that if aspects likely to impact on the Close are identified, the Society can be in a position to react to them in good time.

#### **Planning Applications**

Two planning applications for developments in the Close have been given attention by the Committee during 2001. The first was for the reinstatement of part of 57, The Close as a dormitory for the Cathedral School. The Society's concerns were that such use might spoil the calm in that part of the Close, and might cause increased traffic and parking in the vicinity and hence additional congestion and danger at a busy corner. However, the intention included in the proposal was that children would use the accommodation only for sleeping and be in the main school at other times; also that parents would deposit and collect children and their luggage at the main school itself. The planning approval given includes a Section 106 agreement which should satisfy the Society's points.

The second application was by the Leadenhall School for the replacement of temporary classrooms with a new building. The Society had opposed an earlier design because it did not achieve the standard required for such a building in this important historic site. Members of the Society's Committee were invited to examine the new designs and decided they appeared satisfactory. The application was therefore not opposed. The planning approval again includes a Section 106 agreement which is directed at containing the school numbers and improving control of school generated traffic.

#### **Society Annual General Meeting - April 29<sup>th</sup> 2002**

The next AGM has been arranged to take place on the date above. It is hoped that members will put the date in their diaries now and come to enjoy what has been established as a pleasant social occasion as well as dealing with necessary business. Further notice and relevant papers will be sent to members at a later date.